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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 2

Section 2

Volume 17

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स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ॥ 2 - 2 - 6

Having understood, through the words of the Upanishads the content of The ओं मन्त्र,
The word ओं, as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself, as The ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा
- The Self-effulgent Pure Consciousness, The आत्मा, The Self Itself, the person seeking
ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self knowledge is advised to undertake ओं मन्त्र उपासन - a
process of intensive contemplation on ओं मन्त्र, totally excluding all other thoughts from
one's mind and बुद्धि, and frequently recalling the word ओं, while constantly reflecting on,



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and absorbing the content of The ॐ मन्त्र slowly, firmly and deeply, until one's बुद्धि overcomes all apparent barriers and reaches ॐ Itself, becoming ONE with ब्रह्मन् Itself, परमेश्वर Itself, The आत्मा, The Self I Itself, already in oneself.

Advising शौनक to undertake such ॐ मन्त्र उपासन - intensive contemplation on ॐ मन्त्र, The Teacher now describes the practical means of engaging oneself in such contemplation on ॐ मन्त्र, using a bow-and-arrow analogy to illustrate the effective use of the technique involved. The teacher says:

35. धनुर् गृहीत्वा औपनिषदं महास्त्रम्
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आयम्य तद्वाचगतेन सेतसा
लक्ष्यं तदेव अक्षरं सौम्य विद्धि ॥ 2 - 2 - 3

36. प्रणवो धनुः शरो हि आत्मा
ब्रह्म तत् लक्ष्यं उच्यते
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्व्यं ॥
शरवत् तन्मयो भवत् ॥ 2 - 2 - 4

Let us start with the first line in the second verse.

उच्यते - It is said, just for illustration. There is no real bow or arrow involved in contemplation on ॐ मन्त्र. The bow and arrow analogy brought in here is only to call attention to the necessary clarity, intensity and precision in the process of concentration of one's बुद्धि involved in reaching the desired target which is difficult to comprehend to start with. Therefore the analogy said here should not be taken literally, but its intent should be clearly understood and recognized.

Now, this is the analogy.

प्रणवो धनुः - The प्रणव मन्त्र ॐ is the bow. मन्त्र is word of power, and प्रणव मन्त्र is the word of power revealing the glory of ब्रह्मन्, The glory of परमेश्वर, and That word is ॐ in all the Vedas, in all areas of knowledge. Therefore, think of the ॐ मन्त्र as the bow.



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शरः हि आत्मा - For that bow, the आत्मा, the जीवात्मा, which means, one's entire अन्तःकरण - one's mind and बुद्धि, The "I" consciousness in oneself, is शरः हि, is indeed the arrow. Therefore, think of the "I" consciousness in yourself as the arrow, which means your बुद्धि is the arrow.

Now, you have in your mind and बुद्धि the vision of the bow and the arrow. With the bow as its base, the arrow must hit, must reach the desired target, by appropriate mental concentration and precision of operation. Now, what is the target here?

ब्रह्म तत् लक्ष्यं - The target to be hit by the arrow, to be reached by the arrow, is ब्रह्मन् Itself. That सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म Itself, That परमेश्वर Itself, That ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा - The self-effulgent Pure Consciousness, The आत्मा, The Self I Itself. Therefore,

प्रणवो धनुः, शरो हि आत्मा, ब्रह्म तत् लक्ष्यं means through contemplation on the content of the ओं मन्त्र, The Word ओं, your बुद्धि must reach ब्रह्मन् and become ONE with ब्रह्मन् Itself, already available for recognition in your own बुद्धि, as The Pure Consciousness, The आत्मा, The Self I, ONESELF Itself. How can that be done? That is precisely the process of contemplation described in the first verse, which says:

धनुर् गृहीत्वा - Receiving the ओं मन्त्र bow and holding on to It firmly, which means grasping clearly and firmly the content of the ओं मन्त्र knowledge

औपनिषदं - उपनिषत् भवं - gained from the Upanishads, as unfolded in all the Upanishads you have listened to so far, and holding on to That knowledge by repeated श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं, by repeated listening, reflection and absorption of the Upanishad words on the content of The ओं मन्त्र, the word ओं.

महास्त्रम् - which is the greatest weapon, meaning, which is the most effective means for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, for reaching ब्रह्मन् Itself. Thus

धनुर् गृहीत्वा औपनिषदं महास्त्रम् - having received from the enlightening words of the Upanishads the ओं मन्त्र bow, and grasping clearly and firmly the content of the ओं मन्त्र



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knowledge unfolded by the Upanishads, which is the most effective means for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं - for reaching ब्रह्मन् Itself in terms of knowledge, then शरं हि उपासानिशितं सन्दधीत - set the arrow in the bow properly. How? For the ओं मन्त्र, the शरं - the arrow is the जीवात्मा - the "I" consciousness in oneself, which means, one's बुद्धि vehicle. That arrow, one's बुद्धि, must first be निशितं - disciplined, purified and sharpened through उपासानिशितं - ईश्वर उपासन, prior meditation on परमेश्वर, involving ईश्वर ध्यानं, ईश्वर ईक्षणं and ईश्वर आराधनं (as pointed out in the Taittiriya Upanishad); and thus the बुद्धि must be purified to become fully aware, fully awake and alert, to ओं मन्त्र ज्ञानं - knowledge of the content of the ओं मन्त्र gained from the Upanishads.

The form of ईश्वर उपासन - meditation on परमेश्वर that is the most appropriate in the context here is ओं मन्त्र जप Itself, an undistracted, slow and steady repetition of the ओं मन्त्र, the word ओं, in a low voice, being constantly aware of ओं मन्त्र ज्ञानं - knowledge about ओं, as चतुष्पात्, as three मात्राs in ONE अमात्रा. Such ओं मन्त्र जप Itself is ईश्वर ध्यानं, ईश्वर ईक्षणं and ईश्वर आराधनं, all in ONE.

Thus purifying and sharpening your बुद्धि vehicle through continuous ओं मन्त्र जप शरं हि सन्दधीत सन्धानं कुर्यात् - set your बुद्धि arrow in the ओं मन्त्र bow, firmly and precisely, aiming at the लक्ष्य - the target, the ब्रह्मन् Itself, The आत्मा, The Self I Itself to be reached. So setting the arrow in the bow, continue the ओं मन्त्र जप intensely, with reverential contemplation on the content of the ओं मन्त्र. How?

तद्वावगतेन चेतसा - which means आवृत्त्यक्षुः (कठ 4 - 1) by turning all of one's sense organs and the mind, together with all actions governed by them, towards तत् भाव, ईश्वर भाव - total merger into परमेश्वर Itself, total Oneness with the ओं मन्त्र ज्ञानं - ईश्वर ज्ञानं - आविः ज्ञानं - आत्म ज्ञानं - Self knowledge, The Pure Consciousness, The Absolute Reality of Self I Itself.

So being naturally in ज्ञाननिष्ठा - reverential contemplation on the content of The ओं मन्त्र, The Word ओं, both intellectually and emotionally, now pull the arrow (The बुद्धि)



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with the string in the bow (the **ओं मन्त्र**), gently, steadily, and firmly towards The **परमेश्वर**-conscious, The **ब्रह्मन्**-conscious, The Target-conscious I, The Self in yourself.

आयम्य आकृष्य - so pulling the arrow, the **बुद्धि**, when the bow-string is strung to the maximum, which means, when the **बुद्धि** is totally absorbed in **ज्ञाननिष्ठा**, **ईश्वर**-consciousness

सौम्य - O! Saunaka

लक्ष्यं विद्धि - recognize the target, and

विद्धि - release the arrow and strike the target to become ONE with the target Itself.

तदेव अक्षरं यत् लक्ष्यं, तत् एव अक्षरं ब्रह्म - That which is the target is indeed The **अक्षरं ब्रह्मन्**, The **ब्रह्मन्**, The **आत्मा**, The **Self I** to be reached by your **बुद्धि**.

When a properly directed arrow is released from the bow-string, the flight of the arrow to the target is natural, immediate and instantaneous. So the identification of one's **बुद्धि** with The **ब्रह्मन्**, The **परमेश्वर**, The Pure Consciousness **Self I**, is natural, immediate and instantaneous. That is the inherent power of **ज्ञाननिष्ठा**, being in **परमेश्वर** - consciousness, **ब्रह्मन्** - consciousness at all times.

अप्रमत्तेन वेद्ध्यम्, एकाग्रचित्तेन वेद्ध्यम् - Being in **ओं मन्त्र उपासन** - contemplation on **ओं मन्त्र**, the content of the word **ओं**, in the above manner, may you reach That **लक्ष्य**, That Target, That **ब्रह्मन्**, by your **अप्रमत्त बुद्धि**, **जितेन्द्रिय बुद्धि**, **वैराग्य बुद्धि** - obstruction-free **बुद्धि**, disciplined, purified and sharpened **बुद्धि**, dispassionate **बुद्धि**.

शरवत् तन्मयो भवत - Just as a sharp arrow reaching the target sticks to the target itself, may your **बुद्धि**, may The **I** consciousness in yourself become ONE with **ब्रह्मन्** Itself, the content of the **ओं मन्त्र** Itself, The **ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा**, The **Self I** Itself, by **ओं मन्त्र उपासन**. So advises the teacher to **शौनक**.

The **ओं मन्त्र उपासन** - the contemplation technique described in the above two verses is essentially identical with the five guidelines for **ध्यानयोग** given by Sri Krishna in Chapter



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6 of भगवत् गीता (G.6 - 24 to 26). We may recall here those verses, which we have seen already in detail.

संकल्पप्रभवान् कामान्, त्यक्त्वा सर्वान् अशेषतः ।
मनसैवेन्द्रिग्रामं, विनियम्य समन्ततः ॥
शनैः शनैः उपरमेत्, बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा, न किञ्चित् अपि चिन्तयेत् ॥
यतो यतो निश्चरति, मनः चंचलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतत्, आत्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥
That is the ओँ मन्त्र उपासन described here.

Having instructed Saunaka on how to do ओँ मन्त्र उपासन - how to contemplate on the content of The ओँ मन्त्र- the word ओँ, the teacher picks up the thread and continues his discourse on ब्रह्म ज्ञानं Itself, the nature of अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself.

Saunaka continues to listen, and the teacher says:

37. यस्मिन् ध्यौः पृथिवी च अन्तरिक्षं ओतं
मनः सह प्राणैश्च सर्वैः
तमेव एकं जानथ आत्मानं
अन्या वाचः विमुञ्चथ
अमृतस्य एषः सेतुः ॥

2 - 2 - 5

यस्मिन् - यस्मिन् अक्षरे पुरुषे - In which अक्षर पुरुष, The ब्रह्मन्, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर

ध्यौः पृथिवी अन्तरिक्षं च - the Heaven, the Earth, and all that is in between the Heaven and the Earth, which means, all that exist in the world external to oneself

मनः सह सर्वैः प्राणैः च - along with all that exist in the world internal to oneself, such as the mind, the entire अन्तः करण, and all इन्द्रियाs - all components of body vehicle such as ज्ञानेन्द्रियs, कर्मेन्द्रियs and पञ्चप्राणs - all organs of perception and action, and also all organs involved in one's digestive powers, all of them are

ओतं - ओतं इव ओतं - woven, appear as if interwoven, which means, they are all transient appearances of That same ONE ब्रह्मन् only.



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Consider, for example, a piece of cotton cloth with intricate embroidery needlework showing various real-looking pictures of various kinds. These pictures are real only as long as they are there. If the threads in the cloth are unwound, the pictures disappear, leaving only a bundle of threads. If the threads are further unwound, the threads also disappear, leaving only a piece of cotton.

Therefore, in the example here, what is सत्यं - Real is only cotton, and the threads and the pictures are only transient appearances (मिथ्या) of That same ONE cotton. So is the case with respect to all forms and names, in every उपाधि - in every vehicle, both internal and external to one's own body vehicle. What is real - सत्यं, in all of them is only That अक्षर ब्रह्मन्.

तं एव एकं आत्मानं जानथ - It is That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् that you must learn to recognize as The ONE आत्मा, ONE Self I, without a second

अन्या वाचः विमुञ्चथ, एषः अमृतस्य सेतुः - This आत्मा alone is all you have to recognize and be absolutely certain about, at this stage of your spiritual progress.

अन्या वाचः विमुञ्चथ - Please give up, please discard all other words. Don't be carried away by all the means and ends, कर्मs and कर्मफलs described in अपरा विद्या - all areas of objective knowledge. अपरा विद्या, by itself, cannot take you to मोक्ष - total fulfillment in life. May your desire at this stage of your life be ONLY for परा विद्या, ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge, आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, which is indeed all-inclusive.

ब्रह्मन् is NOT one of the ends to be achieved in life. ब्रह्मन् is indeed the ONLY end to be achieved in life. That end can be achieved only by giving up all other pursuits and concentrating ONLY on the pursuit of ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं - SELF knowledge, with श्रद्धा, भक्ति and ध्यानयोग, when you are ready for such knowledge. If you are not ready for such knowledge, you cannot give up all other pursuits.

अमृतस्य एषः सेतुः - Such concentrated single pointed pursuit of ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं alone is the bridge to reaching अमृतं - gaining Immortality in existence, gaining total liberation from the hold of all transient realities of worldly life, and gaining total fulfillment



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in life, gaining मोक्ष, which is identical with ब्रह्मज्ञानं Itself, आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge Itself, Pure Consciousness Itself. Further

38. अरा इव रथनाभौ संहिता यत्र नाड्यः

स एषः अन्तः चरते बहुधा जायमानः ।

ओं इति एवं ध्यायथ आत्मानं

स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ॥

2 - 2 - 6

रथनाभौ अरा इव

रथनाभौ - Just as the spokes are fixed to the hub of a chariot wheel - the spokes are many but the hub is one, and all the spokes are fixed to the one hub in a wheeled vehicle. The hub of all our activities in this physical body, is the बुद्धि in oneself

यत्र नाड्यः संहिता - meaning समर्पिताः, where all the नाडिs, all the nerves meet together. The entire nervous system in the body is likened to the spokes in a wheeled vehicle. Just as all the spokes are connected to the hub of the wheel, all the nerves from the entire physical body are connected to one's बुद्धि.

स एषः आत्मा अन्तः चरते - That आत्मा described in the last verse as "यस्मिन् ध्योः पृथिवी च अन्तरिक्षं ओतं मनः सह प्राणैश्च सर्वैः - The आत्मा in which all that exist in this creation are interwoven". That आत्मा, अन्तः चरते - moves, appears to move, inside all those nerves, which means That आत्मा pervades all the nerves in the entire physical body, in and out. How?

बहुधा जायमानः, बहुप्रकारेण उत्पद्यमानः - manifesting Itself in manifold ways, in accordance with the mental states of the person. For example, if the person feels happy, the आत्मा appears happy. If the person feels angry, the आत्मा appears angry. In either case, it is not the आत्मा that is happy or angry. The आत्मा pervades all actions and all moods of the person in all expressions of one's प्रकृति गुणs, one's स्वभाव गुणs. The आत्मा Itself is The स्वरूप of the person, and It is never subject to change.

एवं आत्मानं ओं इति ध्यायथ - May you learn to contemplate on That स्वरूप आत्मा as ओं, as The ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा, as The Self-effulgent Pure Consciousness,



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The आत्मा, The Self I, identical with ब्रह्मन् Itself, already in yourself. So saying, the teacher blesses the disciple.

स्वस्ति वः निर्विघ्नं अस्तु, युष्माकं - May you be free from all obstacles to recognition of That आत्मा. May you have no obstacles to Self-recognition

पाराय, पर कूलाय, परब्रह्म प्राप्तये - for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं, for reaching ब्रह्मन्

तमसः परस्तात - crossing the ocean of अविद्या, the ocean of self-ignorance, through ओं
मन्त्र उपासन - contemplation on the content of the ओं मन्त्र - The Word ओं, may your बुद्धि
become ONE with ब्रह्मन् Itself, transcending all obstacles arising from self-ignorance.

We will continue next time.